

Proposed Bill to abolish charges for non-residential social care

Page 2: About you

Please provide your name and other contact details. Please provide at least one means of contacting you (address, e-mail or telephone) - e-mail is our preferred option. (NB: you will be given the option shortly to specify whether it is your name or your organisation's name that is to be used, and you may also request anonymity or confidentiality for your response.)

Your name (mandatory)

██████████

Name of your organisation (if applicable - otherwise leave blank)

Sense Scotland

Your Job Title (if applicable - otherwise leave blank)

██

Contact details (please provide at least one of: email, telephone number, postal address) (mandatory)

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Please indicate below whether you are content for your response to be attributed to you by name (either your name or that of your organisation)

I am content for my response to be attributed to my organisation

Page 4: Your comments on the proposal

Q1: Do you support the principle that non-residential social care services should be available free at the point of delivery to those who have been assessed by a relevant professional as requiring them (as is the case within health care)?

Yes

Please explain your answer

Sense Scotland have played some part in the SACT steering group, and have noted the pressures placed on disabled people and their families by charges in a number of other consultation responses relating to finances. We have contributed to the response submitted by CCPS. Our response is therefore not detailed, as it will mirror that put forward by these other representative bodies. We are particularly concerned by the cumulative effect of reductions in services to individuals, increasing charges and benefits changes. We also believe that it is wrong that someone should be charged for a service that they need to receive in order to participate in their community and to live with dignity, whilst at the same time paying for services used by others which they cannot access.

Q2. Do you agree that legislation is a necessary and appropriate means of addressing the issues identified?

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Yes

Please explain the reasons for your response

This subject has been under discussion for a number of years, and, rather than the situation improving for disabled people, they are subject to increasing cuts in disposable income, as outlined in the previous answer. Current mechanisms which were set up to review charging for services are clearly not progressing rapidly enough. Whilst this matter remains unresolved, disabled people are not consistently able to access the support they require to be full participants, and are treated differently depending on where they live.

Q3. The current system has resulted in varying charges in different areas for the same level and quality of service. Do you agree that there should be consistency across Scotland?

Yes

What do you think the advantages and disadvantages would be?

Advantages: Disabled people will not need to consider charging regimes in order to take up work in a different area, or move in order to be near their families / friends / support networks. They will enjoy the same freedom to make these choices as non-disabled people. Time spent on assessing charges can be better used to improve access to services. Disadvantages: None, although we recognise that funding arrangements may need to be reviewed in the event that the lifting of charges results in unexpected levels of movement between funding / commissioning authorities, and therefore a shift in the balance of what is being provided where. This is a point that raises the wider issue of money following the person, rather than a disadvantage of removing charges.

Q4. Should all social care related services be free at the point of delivery?

Yes

If you answered Yes, please explain your reasons. If you answered No, please explain which services should be excluded, and why. (Please refer to the services set out on page 7 of the consultation document).

Social care related services should be treated the same as health related services - i.e. free at the point of delivery. It is not a choice to receive social care services, and in fact they are becoming increasingly difficult to access, due to increasing eligibility thresholds. Everyone pays taxes - as a minimum via VAT, and therefore are paying for services whether or not they are able to use them. It is reasonable therefore to expect that services that are required are available without charge being a barrier. We are aware of people turning down essential services because of charging. This then endangers the stability / safety of families and the disabled person, and should not be a choice anyone has to make. It would be reasonable to charge someone for the cost of ingredients if they are receiving a meals service.

Q5. What are the likely financial implications (if any) of the proposed Bill to you or your organisation? What (if any) other significant financial implications are likely to arise?

Local authorities / other commissioning bodies will need to receive support to make up the shortfall in funding from charges, minus any savings that might be made in reducing the resources required to

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administer the system. This is to ensure that disabled people do not receive reduced levels of support as a result of the change. To balance this, there should be increased opportunities for disabled people to work (and pay tax) as a result of being able to keep more disposable income, and therefore having increased opportunities to work - for example through being able to pay for suitable transport. There would clearly be a delay before this occurs.

Providers have been facing increasing downward pressures on funding for several years, and have reached the limits of efficiencies that can be made. They will therefore be unable to make up this loss of income from within their own resources, and any changes to the charging regime will need to be explicit that providers will not be expected to do this.

Q6. What do you think the implications of the proposed Bill are for equality? If it is likely to have a substantial negative implication, how might this be minimised or avoided?

Positive

Please explain your answer. If you answered Negative, please suggest any ways this impact could be minimised or avoided.

This Bill would have a beneficial impact on moving towards a more equal society. It would enable more disabled people to have the same options as non-disabled people - such as where to live, work and have access to leisure opportunities. General wellbeing depends on having control, choices and a balanced life. The current situation leaves many people with only their basic survival needs being met.

Q7. Are there any other comments you would wish to make that are relevant to this proposal?

No Response